88-201

Supreme Court, U.S.
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NO.

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE
UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1987

THE STATE OF FLORIDA

Petitioner,

vs.

RIGOBERTO CASO

Respondent.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

ON WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE
FLORIDA SUPREME COURT

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

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QUESTION PRESENTED

WHETHER A PERSON WHO VOLUNTARILY ACCOMPANIES THE POLICE TO THE STATION, IS QUESTIONED FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, AND IS THEREAFTER PERMITTED TO LEAVE, IS IN CUSTODY FOR PURPOSES OF MIRANDA V. ARIZONA, 384 U.S. 436, 86 S.CT. 1602, 16 L.ED.2D 694 (1966), SOLELY BASED UPON THE FACT THAT HE WAS ASKED TO LEAVE HIS PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT DURING THE DAY, HE DID NOT INITIATE CONTACT WITH THE POLICE, AND HE WAS NOT INFORMED THAT HE WAS NOT UNDER ARREST PRIOR TO QUESTIONING.

TABLE OF CITATIONS

CASES	PAGE
Beckwith v. United States, 425 U.S. 341, 96 S.Ct. 1612, 48 L.Ed.2d 1 (1976).....	22
Berkemer v. McCarty, 468 U.S. 420, 104 S.Ct. 3138, 82 L.Ed.2d 317 (1984).....	13
California v. Beheler, 463 U.S. 1121, 103 S.Ct. 3517, 77 L.Ed.2d 1275 (1983).....	13,17 19,21,22,26
Davis v. Allsbrook, 778 F.2d 168 (4th Cir. 1985).....	24
Michigan v. Tucker, 417 U.S. 433 (1974).....	10
Minnesota v. Murphy, 465 U.S. 426, 104 S.Ct. 1136, 79 L.Ed.2d 409, 466 U.S. 945 (1984).....	11,13
Miranda v. Arizona, 384 U.S. 436, 86 S.Ct. 1602, 16 L.Ed.2d 694 (1966).....	5,8 11,12,13,14, 17,18,20,23, 25,26
Oregon v. Elstad, 470 U.S. 298 (1985).....	10

TABLE OF CITATIONS
CONTINUED

CASES **PAGE**

Oregon v. Mathiason,
429 U.S. 492, 97 S.Ct. 722,
50 L.Ed.2d 714 (1977)..... 13,16
19,22,15,26

Roberts v. United States,
445 U.S. 552, 100 S.Ct. 1358,
63 L.Ed.2d 622 (1980)..... 11

OTHER AUTHORITY

28 U.S.C. §1257 (3)..... 2

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Respondent.

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO
THE FLORIDA SUPREME COURT

The Petitioner, the State of Florida, respectfully prays that a writ of certiorari issue to review the judgment and opinion of the Florida Supreme Court, entered in the above-entitled proceeding on June 1, 1988.

OPINIONS BELOW

The opinion of the Supreme Court of Florida is reported at __ So.2d __, Case No. 70,145 (Fla. April 7, 1988)[13 F.L.W. 249] The full opinion is included in the appendix to this petition as Exhibit "A". (App. 1-21).

The order denying the state's motion for rehearing is reproduced in the appendix as Exhibit "B". (App. 22).

JURISDICTION

The opinion of the Florida Supreme Court was entered on April 7, 1988, reversing respondent's conviction. The Florida Supreme Court denied a timely motion for rehearing on June 1, 1988. This petition is filed within 60 days of that denial. The jurisdiction of this

Court is invoked under 28 U.S.C. §1257 (3).

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS INVOLVED

The pertinent part of the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution provides:

> [N]or shall any person. . . be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself. . .

The pertinent part of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution provides:

> [N]or shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law. . .

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On August 1, 1984, the Respondent, **RIGOBERTO CASO**, was charged with two counts of first degree murder and one count of burglary. After police officers discovered the bullet riddled bodies of Norma Montecino and Luis Murgado in a residence in Hialeah, Florida, they received information from a confidential informant that the Respondent had participated in the killings. Accordingly, two Hialeah detectives went to the Respondent's place of employment in order to discuss the investigation. The detectives, who were in an unmarked vehicle and donned plain clothes, approached the Respondent, identified themselves as police officers, and produced police identification. The detectives asked

the Respondent if he would voluntarily accompany them to the police station. After receiving permission from his supervisor, the Respondent agreed to accompany the officers. Prior to leaving, the Respondent asked how he would get back to his place of employment. The detectives stated that they would take him back. The Respondent was not placed under arrest or handcuffed.

After arriving at the police station, the Respondent went with the detectives to an interview room and was presented with an advice of rights form, translated from English to Spanish, which purported to advise him of his Miranda rights. The defendant was informed that he had the right to

remain silent; that anything he said could be used against him in a tribunal or court of law; that he had the right to consult with an attorney before he was questioned and the right to the presence of his attorney during the interrogation. He was further advised that if he decided to answer any questions without the presence of an attorney, he had the right to terminate questioning at any time and the right to consult with an attorney. The translated rights form did not, however, advise the Respondent of the right to appointed counsel at the state's expense if he could not afford an attorney. The Respondent agreed to speak with the detectives.

The detectives informed the Respondent of the information that they had received concerning his involvement in the homicides. The Respondent initially denied any knowledge of the offense but then stated that he would verify the information that the detectives possessed. The Respondent then began to discuss the case and admitted his participation therein. After approximately one hour, the Detectives drove the Respondent back to his place of employment and departed. At trial, the defendant was asked if he requested to leave the police station, to which he responded, "I never wanted to leave because -- I never wanted to leave because I had no reason to. I had no reason to flee there."

During trial, the Respondent moved to exclude his admissions based upon the inadequacy of the advice of rights form. The prosecuting attorney argued that the Respondent was not in custody and Miranda warnings were not required. The trial court determined that Caso was in custody, stating, "Any time you are going to formally interrogate somebody that's a suspect. . . I think you have to be in custody." The trial court nonetheless permitted the State to introduce the Respondent's statements, finding that the advice of rights form was sufficient to inform the Respondent of his rights and that he made a knowing and voluntary waiver thereof. The Respondent was convicted of two counts of second degree murder and one count of burglary.

The Supreme Court of Florida reversed the Respondent's convictions and remanded for a new trial, holding that the trial court had improperly admitted the Respondent's statements at trial. While recognizing that the trial judge had improperly concluded that the Respondent was in custody merely because he was a suspect and was being questioned by the police, the Supreme Court nonetheless accepted that determination, reasoning as follows:

> As in Drake v. State, 441 So.2d 1079 (Fla. 1983), cert. denied, 466 U.S. 978 (1984), in which this Court determined the defendant was in custody at the time of making a statement to the police, Caso was asked to leave his place of employment in the middle of the day. Contrary to the defendants in Beheler and Mathiason, Caso did not initiate the contact with the police. Moreover, Caso was interrogated at the police station and was not

> specifically informed that he was not under arrest, despite being confronted with evidence which implicated him in the crime, factors which, although not dispositive, may bear on the question of whether a person was in custody for Miranda purposes.

(A. 13).

The court accordingly concluded that the Respondent was in custody and applying the principles established in Oregon v. Elstad, 470 U.S. 298 (1985) and Michigan v. Tucker, 417 U.S. 433 (1974), held that the defective warnings were insufficient to permit introduction of the Respondent's statements. Without use of Respondent's admissions, a retrial is impossible.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE WRIT

THE DECISION OF THE COURT BELOW OVERBROADLY CONSTRUES MIRANDA V. ARIZONA, 384 U.S. 436 (1966), TO REQUIRE WARNINGS IN A NONCUSTODIAL SETTING WHERE A PERSON HAS NOT BEEN DEPRIVED OF HIS FREEDOM OF ACTION IN ANY SIGNIFICANT WAY.

In Miranda v. Arizona, 384 U.S. 436, 86 S.Ct. 1602, 16 L.Ed.2d 694 (1966), this Court established a procedural safeguard to protect against compelled self-incrimination. It is clear, however, that the safeguard does not apply, "outside the context of the inherently custodial interrogations for which it was designed." Roberts v. United States, 445 U.S. 552, 100 S.Ct. 1358, 63 L.Ed.2d 622 (1980). See Minnesota v. Murphy, 465 U.S. 426, 104 S.Ct. 1136, 79

L.Ed.2d 409, 466 U.S. 945 (1984). It is only when a person is subjected to "questioning initiated by law enforcement officers after [he] has been taken into custody or otherwise deprived of his freedom of action in any significant way" that Miranda warnings are required. Miranda v. Arizona, 384 U.S. at 444. The court below ignores these well settled principles by holding that Miranda warnings were required in the instant case. A brief review of past decisions of this court demonstrates the patent misapplication of the guidelines established therein by the court below.

In determining whether a person is "in custody" pursuant to Miranda, an objective, reasonable man standard is applied. Berkemer v. McCarty, 468 U.S. 420, 104 S.Ct. 3138, 82 L.Ed.2d 317 (1984). Thus the sole concern of a reviewing court is to determine whether a reasonable man in the suspect's position would feel a restraint on his freedom of movement of the degree associated with a formal arrest. Minnesota v. Murphy, supra; California v. Beheler, 463 U.S. 1121 (1983).

In Oregon v. Mathiason, 429 U.S. 492, 97 S.Ct. 711, 50 L.Ed.2d 714 (1977), this Court held that the totality of the circumstances

did not render the suspect "in custody" for Miranda purposes. In that case a police officer initiated contact with Mathiason by leaving his card at his apartment asking that he call him. Mathiason called the officer and agreed to meet with him at the state patrol office. After meeting in the hallway of the office, Mathiason was taken in a room and advised that he was not under arrest. The door of the room was closed and the officer proceeded to tell Mathiason that he wanted to talk to him about a burglary. Mathiason was advised that his truthfulness would possibly be considered by the district attorney or judge and further that the officer believed

that he was involved in the theft because his fingerprints were found at the scene. The information concerning the fingerprint evidence was false. Mathiason confessed to the offense. After approximately one half hour, he was permitted to leave. In reversing the Oregon Supreme Court's determination that Mathiason was in custody, this Court stated:

> In the present case, however, there is no indication that the questioning took place in a context where respondent's freedom to depart was restricted in any way. He came voluntarily to the police station, where he was immediately informed that he was not under arrest. At the close of a 1/2 hour interview respondent did in fact leave the police station without hindrance. It is clear from these facts that Mathiason was not in custody "or otherwise deprived of his freedom of action in any significant way.

This Court further held that neither the fact that the interview took place in a "coercive environment"; or that the questioning of a suspect took place at the station house; or that the officer made false statements concerning the evidence discovered at the scene, rendered Mathiason "in custody", because none of these factors restricted his freedom to depart in any way.

Subsequent to the decision in Oregon v. Mathiason, supra, this Court again reviewed the decision of a lower court which erroneously held that a suspect was in custody during a station house ques-

tioning. In California v. Beheler, 463 U.S. 1121, 103 S.Ct. 3517, 77 L.Ed.2d 1275 (1983), Beheler was involved in a killing and called the police to the scene. At that point, Beheler told the police that one of his friends had committed the killing and that the gun was hidden in his backyard. Beheler consented to a search of his yard and the gun was discovered. Later that evening Beheler voluntarily agreed to accompany the police to the station house, after being advised that he was not under arrest. At the station house, Beheler was questioned for approximately thirty minutes without being advised of his Miranda rights. He was then

permitted to leave. Five days later he was arrested and charged with murder.

The California Court of Appeals reversed Beheler's conviction holding that the interview constituted a custodial interrogation without benefit of Miranda warnings, focusing on the fact that the interview took place in the station house, that before the interview the police had identified Beheler as a suspect, and that the interview was designed to produce incriminating statements. This Court, in curt fashion, summarily reversed the California Court of Appeals, reiterating the standards

established in Oregon v. Mathiason, supra, holding that it was "beyond doubt that Beheler was neither taken into custody nor significantly deprived of his freedom of action." California v. Beheler, supra, 463 U.S. at 1123.

The decision below directly conflicts with the well-established precedent of this Court concerning custodial questioning. As previously noted, the undisputed facts are that the defendant was approached at work by two police officers and asked if he would come with them to the police station. Before agreeing to go, Caso received permission from his boss and asked how he would get back to

work. The officers stated that they would bring him back.

Upon arriving at the station, Caso was taken to a room, advised of various constitutional rights, and advised of the information that the police had implicating him in the crime. Caso eventually verified the information and was returned to his place of employment after approximately one hour. In holding that the interview constituted a custodial interrogation requiring Miranda warnings, the Supreme Court of Florida relied solely upon the facts that Caso was asked to leave his place of employment in the middle of the day, that Caso did

not initiate the contact with the police, and that Caso was not specifically informed that he was not under arrest. These facts do not establish that Caso was in custody, however, where his freedom of action was never restricted in any way. California v. Beheler, supra.

Initially, the fact that Caso was asked to leave his place of employment during the day is wholly irrelevant to the question of whether there was a restraint on Caso's movement. Certainly, a request from police officers, during day hours, to voluntarily accompany them to the station for questioning is neither unreasonable

nor coercive. The fact is, Caso voluntarily agreed to accompany the officers, without coercive pressure of any sort. The locale of the request was not a factor of significance in this case.

Secondly, the fact that Caso did not initiate contact with the police likewise does not convert the encounter into a custodial interrogation. In Oregon v. Mathiason, supra, the police initiated contact with Mathiason, as was specifically recognized by this Court in California v. Beheler, supra. Likewise, the police initiated contact with the defendant in Beckwith v. United States, 425 U.S. 341, 96 S.Ct.

1612, 48 L.Ed.2d 1 (1976), another case in which this Court determined that the defendant was not in custody for purposes of Miranda. Clearly, where a suspect is contacted by the police and voluntarily agrees to a meeting, he is not considered " in custody" by mere virtue of the police request.

Finally, the fact that Caso was interrogated at the police station and was not informed that he was not under arrest does not render him in custody in the instant case. While both Mathiason and Beheler were advised that they were not under arrest prior to the station house interrogation, Caso was specifically advised that the

officers would bring him back to his place of employment subsequent to the interview. In fact, they did just that. Accordingly, the assurances of the officers were clearly sufficient to inform the defendant that he was not under arrest. While Caso was not informed that he was not under arrest, the totality of the circumstances indicates a lack of custody. See Davis v. Allsbrook, 778 F.2d 168 (4th Cir. 1985).

Accordingly, the decision of the Supreme Court of Florida ignores the dictates of this Court which hold that the ultimate inquiry in determining custody is whether there is a formal arrest or

restraint of movement of the degree associated with a formal arrest. Oregon v. Mathiason, supra. The defendant voluntarily accompanied the officers to the station, was questioned for one hour, and was returned to his place of employment. The Florida Supreme Court opinion is devoid of any indication of official coercion or facts demonstrating a restraint of Caso's movement. As such, there was no basis upon which to hold that the defendant was in custody and to suppress his admissions of involvement in this double homicide. The blatant expansion of the application of Miranda to noncustodial settings such as in the instant case will wreak havoc

in both law enforcement and the judicial review of the actions of law enforcement officials. As in Oregon v. Mathiason, supra and California v. Beheler, supra, this Court should summarily reverse the lower court and reaffirm the principle that a person is "in custody" for Miranda purposes only where there is a formal arrest or restraint on freedom of movement of the degree associated with formal arrest.

CONCLUSION

Based upon the foregoing, petitioner requests this Court to issue its Writ of Certiorari in this cause.

Respectfully submitted,

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APPENDIX

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SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

No. 70,145

RIGOBERTO CASO, Petitioner,
vs.
STATE OF FLORIDA, Respondent.

[April 7, 1988]

EHRLICH, J.

We have for review Caso v. State, 501 So.2d 646 (Fla. 3d DCA 1986), in which the district court certified a question as one of great public importance. We have jurisdiction. Art. V, §3 (b)(4), Fla.Const.

On May 12, 1983, Norma Montecdino and Luis Murgado were murdered at a residence in Hialeah, Florida. On or about July 7, 1983, the Hialeah Police Department received information from at least one confidential informant that

Caso, as the "wheelman," had participated in the crime with two other individuals. Based upon this information, two detectives went to Caso's place of employment in October of 1983, displayed identification and asked if Caso would voluntarily go to the police station and talk to them. Caso asked his employer if this would be okay and then agreed to go. Caso asked the detectives how he would return to work and one of the detectives informed Caso that he would take him back.

After arriving at the police station, Caso was taken to an interrogation room where officers confronted him with the information they had gathered that implicated him in the crime. Caso was then presented with an

advice of rights form which did not advise him of the right to appointed counsel at the state's expense if he could not afford an attorney. The officers testified that Caso eventually verified the information that the detectives already had and was then returned to his place of employment. The interrogating detectives then proceeded to the State Attorney's office, where they related the information that they had obtained from Caso to the Assistant State Attorney in charge of the investigation. A warrant was then issued for Caso's arrest.

Caso's defense counsel objected at trial to the testimony of the detectives that revealed the confession. The objection was based upon the inadequency

of the advice of rights form, which failed to state that an attorney would be appointed if the defendant could not afford one. The prosecuting attorney responded that Caso was not in custody and Miranda warnings were therefore not required. The trial court stated: "That's not so. Any time you are going to formally interrogate somebody that's a suspect. . . I think you have to be in custody." Although finding that Caso was in custody at the time of the interrogation and the advice of rights form could have been better, the trial court concluded that the confession was voluntary and made with full knowledge of his rights. The jury found Caso guilty of two counts of second-degree murder and one count of burglary of a structure. Caso was sentenced to two concurrent terms of life imprisonment.

On appeal, the district court noted that the trial court's finding that Caso was in custody was supported by substantial competent evidence. 501 So.2d at 646 n. 1. In regard to the adequacy of the Miranda warnings given to Caso prior to his questioning, the district court stated that despite Caso's "thoughtful and well-presented arguments," it was bound by stare decisis to follow Alvord v. State, 322 So.2d 533 (Fla. 1975), cert. denied, 428 U.S. 923 (1976). In Alvord, this Court held that the failure of a police officer to include in a Miranda warning the advice that an attorney would be appointed to represent the defendant if he were indigent did not require exclusion of the defendant's statements to the police officer. The district

court accordingly affirmed Caso's convictions and sentences, but certified the following question as having a great effect on the proper administration of justice:

> Whether the decision in Alvord v. State, 322 So.2d 533 (Fla. 1975), holding admissible in the State's case-in-chief the defendant's confession obtained in a post-Miranda custodial interrogation and in the absence of advise regarding the defendant's right to appointed counel if he could not afford an attorney, should be reexamined in light of Oregon v. Elstad, 470 U.S. 298 (1985).

We answer the certified question in the affirmative.

We first address the issue of whether Caso was in custody at the time of questioning by the detectives. In

Miranda, the United States Supreme Court established a procedural safeguard to protect an individual's fifth amendment privilege against compelled self-incrimination from the coercive pressures of custodial interrogation. Miranda v. Arizona, 384 U.S. 436 (1966). The procedural safeguard does not, however, apply "outside the context of the inherently coercive custodial interrogations for which it was designed." Roberts v. United States, 445 U.S. 552, 560 (1980). The police are required to give Miranda warnings only when the person is in custody. California v. Beheler, 463 U.S. 1121, 1124 (1983). In determining whether a suspect is in custody, "the ultimate inquiry is simply whether there is a 'formal arrest or restraint on freedom

of movement' of the degree associated with a formal arrest.'" Id. at 1125 (quoting Oregon v. Mathiason, 429 U.S. 492 (1977)). At this Court and the United States Supreme Court have previously recognized, "the only relevant inquiry is how a reasonable man in the suspect's position would have undestood his situation." Roman v. State, 475 So.2d 1228, 1231 (Fla. 1985), cert. denied, 475 U.S. 1090 (1986) (quoting Berkemer v. McCarty, 468 U.S. 420, 442 (1984)).

The statements by the trial judge regarding custody in the present case indicate that the judge felt Caso was in custody because he was a suspect and was being questioned by the police. Therefore, we agree with the state that

the trial court's finding of custody was not based upon proper analysis. We decline, however, to accept the state's argument that because the trial court failed to apply the correct standard in determining the issue of custody the trial court's decision cannot be sustained. A conclusion or decision of a trial court will generally be affirmed, even when based on erroneous reasoning, if the evidence or an alternative theory supprts it. See Applegate v. Barnett Bank of Tallahassee, 377 So.2d 1150 (Fla. 1979); Cohen v. Mohawk, Inc., 137 So.2d 222 (Fla. 1962). A trial court's findings regarding whether a suspect was in custody are clothed with a presumption of correctness and will not be overturned if there is competent,

substantial evidence which would support the decision under the correct analysis. Cf. Acensio v. State, 497 So.2d 640 (Fla. 1986)(a trial court's findings in regard to whether a confession was freely and voluntarily given are clothed with a presumption of correctness).

The state relies upon the decisions of the United States Supreme Court in Beheler, 463 U.S. 1121, and Mathiason, 429 U.S. 492, in which the Court held that the defendants were not in cutody, in support of its argument that the trial court's determination was erroneous. The district court below correctly noted, however, that there was competent, substantial evidence upon which the trial court could have based a finding that Caso was in custody at the

time he was questioned by police. As in Drake v. State, 441 So.2d 1079 (Fla. 1983), cert. denied, 466 U.S. 978 (1984), in which this Court determined the defendant was in custody at the time of making a statement to the police, Caso was asked to leave his place of employment in the middle of the day. Contrary to the defendants in Beheler and Mathiason, Caso did not initiate the contact with police. Moreover, Caso was interrogated at the police station and was not specifically informed that he was not under arrest, despite being confronted with evidence which implicated him in the crime, factors which, although not dispositive, may bear on the question of whether a person was in custody for Miranda purposes. See Drake, 441 So.2d at 1081; Roman, 475

So.2d at 1231. The record contains facts which are sufficient to support a conclusion that Caso was in custody at the time of his questioning by the police. Accordingly, the district court below did not err in indulging the presumption in favor of the validity of the lower court's ruling.

As to the question certified by the district court below, Caso contends that this Court's opinion in Alvord signified a marked departure from established state and federal precedent in which it had consistently been ruled that a defendant's custodial confession, given without the full Miranda warning, was inadmissible in the state's case-in-chief. Caso argues that it is clear from the decisions in Oregon v. Elstad,

470 U.S. 298 (1985) and Michigan v. Tucker, 417 U.S. 433 (1974), that a defendant's confession is inadmissible under the circumstances present in Alvord and the case at bar.

In reaching the decision in Alvord v. State, this Court relied on Michigan v. Tucker, in which the United States Supreme Court was "asked to extend the Wong Sun fruits doctrine to suppress the testimony of a witness for the prosecution whose identity was discovered as the result of a staement taken from the accused without benefit of full Miranda warnings." Oregon v. Elstad, 470 U.S. at 308. See Wong Sun v. United States, 371 U.S. 471 (1963). As in Alvord and the present case, police officers in Tucker failed to

advise respondent that he would be furnished counsel free of charge if he could not pay for such services himself.

The Supreme Court stated that the "procedural safeguards [in Miranda] were not themselves rights protected by the Constitution but were instead measures to insure that the right against compulsory self-incrimination was protected." 417 U.S. at 444. The Supreme Court concluded that the facts demonstrated that the defendant had not been deprived by police of his privilege against compulsory self-incrimination, noting that "the record in this case clearly shows that respondent was informed that any evidence taken could be used against him. The record is also clear that respondent was asked whether

he wanted an attorney and that he replied that he did not." Id. at 444-45 (footnotes omitted). Because there was no actual infringement on the respondent's constitutional rights, the Court determined that admissibility of the witness's testimony was not controlled by the doctrine expressed in Wong Sun. Id. at 445-46.

Because there was no controlling precedent regarding the issue of admissibility of the "fruits" of a confession obtained without full Miranda warnings, the Tucker Court examined the matter as a question of principle. The two principles that governed were the deterrent effect on police conduct and protection of courts from untrustworthy evidence. The Tucker Court concluded

that "[w]hat ever deterrent effect on future police conduct the exclusion of those statements may have had, we do not believe it would be significantly augmented by excluding the testimony of the witness Henderson as well." 417 U.S. at 448. Accordingly, the "fruits" of the defendant's unwarned statement did not have to be excluded.

It was from the analysis of the deterrent value in suppressing the witness's testimony that the Alvord opinion drew support. The Tucker Court's discussion of the additional deterrent of suppressing the fruit of the Miranda violation, however, provides no support for admitting the confession itself. As Justice Rehnquist noted in Tucker, it was significant that the

"statements actually made by respondent to the police. . . were excluded at trial in accordance with Johnson v. New Jersey, 384 U.S. 719 (1966)." 417 U.S. at 448. Therefore, it appears that reliance upon Tucker in Alvord may have been misplaced.

Further support for the conclusion that this Court may have misinterpreted Michigan v. Tucker in the Alvord decison is found in Oregon v. Elstad, a recent decision of the United States Supreme Court. Justice O'Connor, in an overview of the Miranda exclusionary rule, noted that the fifth amendment only prohibits the use of compelled testimony by the prosecution in its case in chief, but stated that the "[f]ailure to administer Miranda warnings creates a presumption

of compulsion. Consequently, unwarned statements that are otherwise voluntary within the meaning of the fifth amendment must nevertheless be excluded from evidence under Miranda. Thus, in the individual case, Miranda's preventive medicine provides a remedy even to the defendant who has suffered no identifiable constitutional harm." 470 U.S. at 307. Justice O'Connor pointed out that the presumption of coercion did not bar use of the statements and their fruits for such purposes as impeachment on cross-examination. In illustration, Justice O'Connor discussed the rule of law established in Tucker, stating that the "unwarned confession must, of course, be suppressed," but "introduction of the third-party witness' testimony did not

violate Tucker's Fifth Amendment rights." Id. We therefore recede from that portion of Alvord which holds that the trial court did not err in admitting the custodial statements of the defendant. We hold that the failure to advise a person in custody of the right to appointed counsel if indigent renders the custodial statements inadmissible in the prosecution's case-in-chief and Caso's statement in the present case was improperly admitted.

The erroneous admission of statements obtained in violation of Miranda rights is subject to harmless error analysis. Kight v. State, 512 So.2d 922, 926 (Fla. 1987). Caso correctly contends that the admission of his confession constituted reversible

error. The testimony of the police officers regarding Caso's statement was the only evidence presented at trial connecting Caso to the murders. We cannot declare a belief beyond a reasonable doubt that the impermissible admission of the contents of Caso's confession did not affect the jury verdict. See State v. DiGuilio, 491 So.2d 1129 (Fla. 1980). The error was, therefore, not harmless.

Accordingly, we quash the decision below affirming Caso's conviction and remand to the district court with directions to remand the case to the trial court for a new trial.

It is so ordered.

OVERTON, SHAW, BARKETT, GRIMES and

KOGAN, JJ., Concur McDONALD, C.J., Dissents

NOT FINAL UNTIL TIME EXPIRES TO FILE REHEARING MOTION AND, IF FILED, DETERMINED.

Application for Review of the Decision of the District Court of Appeal - Certified Great Public Importance

Third District - Case No. 85-1538

Bennett H. Brummer, Public Defender, Eleventh Judicial Circuit, Miami, Florida; and Lisa Berlow-Lehner, Special Assistant Public Defender, Miami, Florida for Petitioner

Robert A. Butterworth, Attorney General, and Michael J. Neimand and Julie S. Thornton, Assistant Attorneys General, Miami, Florida, for Respondent.

SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

Wednesday, June 1, 1988

CASE NO. 70,145

RIGOBERTO CASO

Petitioner,

vs.

THE STATE OF FLORIDA,

Respondent.

Upon consideration of the motion for rehearing filed in the above cause by attorney for Respondent, and response thereto, it is ordered that said be and the same is hereby denied.

OVERTON, EHRLICH, SHAW, BARKETT, GRIMES and KOGAN concur, McDonald, C.J. Dissents

A True Copy

TEST
Sid J. White, Clerk, Supreme Court

SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

TUESDAY, JUNE 21, 1988

CASE NO. 70,145

RIGOBERTO CASO,

PETITIONER,

vs.

STATE OF FLORIDA,

RESPONDENT.

_____/

Motion to Recall the Mandate Pending Review from Respondent is hereby denied.

cc: Julie S. Thornton, Esquire
Lisa M. Berlow-Lehner, Esquire

A TRUE COPY

TEST
Sid J. White, Clerk, Supreme Court